

# Manickavasakar's Devotion and Knowledge

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## Devotional attitudes of the Four Saivite Gurus:

Each of the four Saivite Preceptors [gurus] had a different attitude of devotion towards Lord Siva. Thirugnanasambanathar considered Siva as his father. So, all of his Thevaram verses represent that form of devotion. In most of his songs, he praises Siva along with Uma, as father and mother. It fits, because when he was left crying alone by his father near the bank of a tank in Sirkazhi, to pacify him, he was fed the milk of knowledge by mother Parvathi.

Sundaramurthi Nayanar looked upon Siva with Sakha bhava, that of a friend. That friendship made him to address Siva as Pithan [mad man], asked Parameswaranto go as a messenger -- a go between -- to inform of his love to Paravai Nachiyar. He was called by all as Thambiraan Thozhar (தம்பிரான் தோழர்), a friend of Sivapiran. In addition, the liberty he took with the Lord can clearly be evinced in his poems.

Thirunavaukarasar [Appar] considered himself the servant of Siva. He always carried the uzhavaram [weeding tool] with him to remove all the thorns around the temples, and sanctified the service of Siva Temples with his Uzhavarappani [உழவாரப்பணி]<sup>2</sup>. This attitude of service is extolled by his famous couplet 'தன்கடன் அடியேனையும் தாங்குதல் என்கடன் பணி செய்து கிடப்பதே'<sup>3</sup>, meaning the responsibility of Siva is to take care his devotee [Thirunavukarasar] and his responsibility is to perform Sivathondu [service to Siva] and be at peace with that service.

However, the relationship between Manickavasakar and Siva is totally different. It is like one between the prodigal son and a loving parent. Manickavasakar has expressed this information in various places in his Thiruvacakam. He expresses his gratitude to Siva by the following two lines in Sivapuram as: 'நாமிற் கடையாய் கிடந்த அடியேற்குத் தாமிற்சிறந்த தயவான தத்துவனே'<sup>3</sup> [Oh, Philosopher! You have become better than a mother to me, a person worthless than a dog]. We can see such self-denunciation of Manickavasakar in many of his poems. We limit ourselves at this time to the devotion - bhakti, the knowledge of Manickavasakar and his message to us all.

## How to obtain the blessing of Siva:

Everyday, we mechanically recite prayers to God/Goddesses in various languages. Will it really bring upon us, the blessings of the God/s? Will we reach their abodes at the end of our lives? What is the best way to obtaining paralogam, or abode of Siva? Manickavasakar very clearly shows us the way in his Sivapuram in the following lines:

சொல்லியாட்டின்வொருநூரைந்து சொல்லுவார்....- 93-95

Those who sing understanding and feeling the meaning of the song that has been sung, will reach Sivapuram [Kailasam, Siva's abode] and will rest under the feet of Lord Siva, respected and praised by many.

Thiruvathavurar [Manickavasakar] makes it very clear that whatever words, songs, etc., we use to praise and pray Siva, we need to understand not only the meaning of those words, but also need to feel the inner meaning of those words. Once the inner meaning is felt within, the devotion becomes full, and our prayers reach Siva, towards whom we have directed our prayer.

With these three lines he throws away many of the blind beliefs we have towards prayer. Repeating words mechanically, without knowing what they mean, and without devotion to God -- will not bring any effect. At that time, there will be no difference between a tape-recorder, or a CD player, or a computer-recorded song that keeps on repeating -- and our prayer.

We know that these instruments -- which can sing the Lord's prayer a million times -- will not reach His abode. Then, how we can achieve that goal by just mechanically repeating anything?

What a reformer he was! In addition to his bhakti, as a preceptor, he also has guided us the way to reach the feet of Lord Siva and get His blessings. Great! His scientific knowledge: We generally attribute any and every scientific discoveries and knowledge to westerners. In the few centuries of rule by them, we tend to believe anything and everything they utter as scripture. However, it is not so. The theory of evolution, as taught in school, is postulated by Charles